

Birth Rates

Adolescents who become mothers are less likely to complete high school or to have steady employment, and more likely to receive public assistance and to experience marital instability, compared with peers who delay childbearing (1). Economic and social disadvantage are among the causes, as well as the consequences, of teenage child bearing (2). Infants born to teenage mothers are at a greater risk of low birthweight and infant mortality. (See figures 21 and 22.) Teen mothers are also less likely to receive adequate and timely prenatal care and more likely to smoke (3). Second and higher order births further increase the risk of poor outcomes for young women and their children.

■ In 1997–98 there were approximately 493,600 births annually to adolescents 13–19 years of age, accounting for nearly 13 percent of all births in each year. The birth rate for adolescent women 15–19 years of age was 51.5 births per 1,000 adolescent women, and the birth rate for very young adolescents (13–14 years of age) was 2.6.

■ There is a consistent pattern of increasing birth rate by maternal age. Overall 19-year old teens were nearly seven times as likely to have a birth as their 15-year old counterparts.

■ Birth rates vary considerably by race and Hispanic origin. In 1997–98 Hispanic and non-Hispanic black teens had the highest birth rates followed by American Indian teens; Asian or Pacific Islander teens had the lowest birth rates. Among young women 19 years of age, the birth rate among Hispanics and non-Hispanic blacks was about 3.5 times that of Asian or Pacific Islanders (149.3 and 141.0 compared with 42.6 per 1,000).

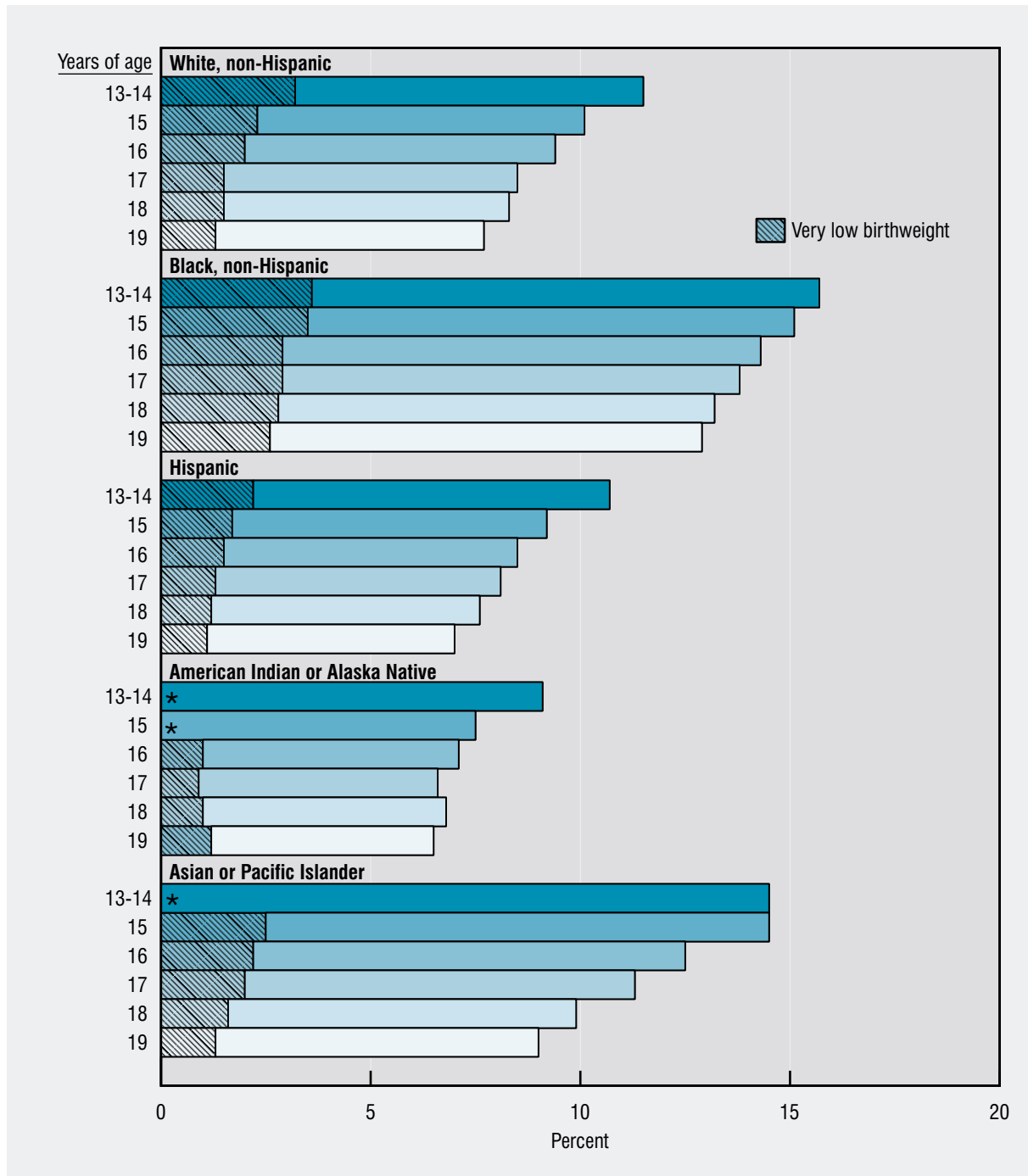
■ Teenage birth rates have steadily declined in the 1990's and have fallen almost 18 percent among adolescents 15–19 years of age since 1991 (4). There has also been a 21-percent decrease in the rates of second and higher order births to teens in the 1990's, while the proportion of births to teenagers that were

second and higher order declined from 25 percent in 1991 to 22 percent in 1998 (4, 5).

References

1. Sex and America's Teenagers. New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute. 1994.
2. Kirby D. No easy answers: Research findings on programs to reduce teen pregnancy. Washington: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. 1997.
3. Ventura SJ, Mathews TJ, Curtin SC. Declines in teenage birth rates 1991–97: National vital statistics reports; vol 47 no 12. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 1998.
4. Ventura SJ, Martin JA, Curtin SC, Mathews TJ. Births: Final data for 1998. National vital statistics reports; vol 48 no 3. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2000.
5. Ventura, SJ, Curtin, SC. Recent trends in teen births in the United States. Stat Bull. Jan–Mar 1999.

Figure 20. Birth rates among adolescents 13–19 years of age, by birth order, age, race, and Hispanic origin: United States, average annual 1997–98



* Second and higher live births were too few to be considered reliable and are not shown separately.

NOTES: Excludes live births with unknown birth order. See Appendix II, Rates, birth. See Data Table for data points graphed.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System. See related *Health, United States, 2000*, table 3.